# Herbert Edward Ryle

Ryle was born in [Onslow Square](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Onslow_Square), [South Kensington](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Kensington), London, on 25 May 1856, the second son of [John Charles Ryle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Charles_Ryle) (1816–1900), the first [Bishop of Liverpool](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bishop_of_Liverpool), and his second wife, Jessie Elizabeth Walker.

After attending school at Hill House, in [Wadhurst](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wadhurst%22%20%5Co%20%22Wadhurst), Sussex, Ryle went to [Eton College](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eton_College) in 1868. In 1875 he won the Newcastle scholarship, and in the same year he proceeded to [King's College, Cambridge](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/King%27s_College%2C_Cambridge), as a classical scholar. A football accident in 1877 prevented him from further involvement in [athletics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sport) . Between 1879 and 1881, however, he won every distinction open at Cambridge to students of theology, including a first class in the theological tripos.

Ryle was elected a [Fellow](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fellow) of King's College, Cambridge, in April 1881, and began a career of twenty years as a teacher. He was ordained [deacon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deacon) in 1882 and priest in 1883.

From September 1886 to March 1888 Ryle was [Principal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Principal_%28university%29) of [St David's College, Lampeter](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Wales%2C_Lampeter), from when until 1901 he taught at the [University of Cambridge](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Cambridge) as Hulsean Professor of [Divinity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Divinity). During these years Ryle published a number of books connected with his academic interests, including *The Early Narratives of Genesis* (1892), *The Canon of the Old Testament* (1892), and *Philo and Holy Scripture* (1895).

In 1900 Ryle was appointed [Bishop of Exeter](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bishop_of_Exeter), being [consecrated](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Consecrated) at [Westminster Abbey](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Westminster_Abbey), then he became [Bishop of Winchester](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bishop_of_Winchester).

In December 1910 Ryle was appointed [Dean of Westminster](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dean_of_Westminster). He was installed in [Westminster Abbey](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Westminster_Abbey) in April 1911, at a time when the building was being prepared for the coronation of [King George V](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_V_of_the_United_Kingdom). Under his guidance and with the help of his advisers, the dignity of the Abbey services was notably increased.

During [World War I](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I) Ryle used to take the midday service of intercession personally, and he was responsible for the many special services held in wartime.

The idea of a Tomb of [The Unknown Warrior](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Unknown_Warrior) was first conceived in 1916 by the Reverend [David Railton](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Railton), who wrote to Dean Ryle in 1920 proposing that an unidentified [British](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armed_Forces_of_the_United_Kingdom) soldier from the battlefields in France be buried with due ceremony in Westminster Abbey "amongst the kings" to represent the many hundreds of thousands of [Empire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Empire) dead. The idea was strongly supported by Ryle and the then Prime Minister [Lloyd George](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Lloyd_George). There was initial opposition from [King George V](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_V_of_the_United_Kingdom) (who feared that such a ceremony would reopen the wounds of a recently concluded war) and others but a surge of emotional support from the great number of bereaved families ensured its adoption. The inscription on the tomb was composed by Ryle.

He had never been strong and had a history of heart trouble. In the autumn of 1924 his health broke down. After five months in a nursing home at [Bournemouth](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bournemouth) he returned in May 1925 to the Deanery, where he died on 20 August. He was buried on 25 August in Westminster Abbey in a spot close to the tomb of [The Unknown Warrior](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Unknown_Warrior).